

22. SOME OBSERVATIONS OF PLAINS CUPIDS *EUCHRYSOPS PANDAVA*
ON *CYCAS CIRCINALIS*¹

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Plains Cupid *Euchrysops pandava* is a very common butterfly found throughout India. It is a butterfly with weak flight, and one that hardly visits nectar plants. Plants of

Caesalpiniaceae, Mimosaceae and other Cycads have been recorded as its host plants (Wynter-Blyth 1957). However, no specific mention is made of *Cycas circinalis* as its host



Fig. 1: a. Group of *Cycas circinalis* plants, b. Male Plains Cupid, c. *Polyrachis* sp. ant attending the caterpillar, d. Plains Cupid caterpillar on *Cycas circinalis*

plant. During the second week of May 2005 I visited the Melkote Temple Wildlife Sanctuary to assess the status of *Cycas circinalis*, where I observed a number of female Plains Cupid laying eggs on the shoots, and each shoot had 5-10 eggs. The eggs were white in colour and disc-shaped. The caterpillar was woodlouse-shaped and had two different colour forms, one green and the other reddish brown.

We saw three different species of ants (*Polyrhachis* sp.) constantly attending to the caterpillars. Ants were seen tapping the lower side of the abdomen of the caterpillar, and in response the caterpillar secreted a white liquid, which was readily consumed by the ants. Sometimes three ants were seen simultaneously feeding on the white liquid from the same caterpillar. The ants defended their caterpillars very possessively.

Courtship of the Plains Cupid has also been observed

on many *Cycas circinalis* (pers. obs.). Typically the males sit on the branches of *Cycas* with their wings open. Whenever a female comes the males try to draw the attention of the female by beating the wings and by following the female.

The *Cycas circinalis* is an endangered species (Sharma *et al.* 1984), and its association with Plains Cupid is an important aspect for study for its conservation (Fig. 1).

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23. OCCURRENCE OF GIANT ISOPOD *BATHYNOMUS GIGANTEUS* A. MILNE EDWARDS 1879 IN THE CHENNAI COASTAL WATERS¹

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A giant isopod species was recorded in the Chennai coastal waters at a depth of less than 90 m in April 2004. The species was identified as *Bathynomus giganteus* A. Milne Edwards 1879. It belongs to the Order Isopoda and Suborder Falbelligera of the Class Crustacea. The collection of this species, generally occurring in deeper waters, from relatively shallow waters is of interest. The cause of migration of this species to shallow water is worth investigating, especially in Chennai.

Order Isopoda contains numerous species and they are classified under 95 families. Isopods generally occur on all substrata and at all depths. Most of the species occur in intertidal and shelf waters, and a few are known to occur in freshwater. The shallow water forms are often abundant beneath rocks, among sea weeds, coral rubble, mussel beds, chambers of sponges and in detritus. Normally, the size of the adult isopod ranges from 30 to 50 mm in length, but as an oddity there are deep-sea species measuring 200 to 400 mm in length. Isopods are known by

various names, such as Beach Slater, Pill Bug and Scale Louse.

The occurrence of the massive isopod species *Bathynomus giganteus* is uncommon in Chennai coastal waters. This species belongs to the Family Cirolanidae. It measured 32.5 cm in length and 11.5 cm in width. The members of this family are distributed mainly in the western Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico, the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. While the Cirolanids occur in great abundance in both temperate and tropical waters, often constituting the most numerous group, the occurrence of the giant isopod is highly sporadic and its collection rare.

The occurrence of this species was reported earlier by Srikrishnadhas and Venkatasamy (2003) in the inshore waters of Thoothukudi. The specimen collected by them measured 26.0 cm (total length) and 9.5 cm (in breadth). There are many other giant isopod species belonging to the genus *Bathynomus*, namely *B. dodereini*, *B. affinis*, *B. propinquus*,